Decker Family Known for Their Longevity

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William B. Decker lived to be 103 years of age and was the oldest member of the Masonic Lodge in the world. One of his sons, Luther Berger "Bud" Decker, lived to be 92 years of age and served as the Fairbury City Clerk for over 40 years. The story of the Decker family began with the birth of William Burgher Decker in 1854 in Ghent, New York. He was the son of Henry P. Decker (1822-1905) and Catherine S. Colon (1816-1904).

William Decker grew up in the Ghent, New York, area, 30 miles south of Albany. When William was 21, he joined the Chatham, New York, Masonic Lodge. Sometime before 1881, William emigrated to a farm in Owego Township, east of Pontiac. In 1881, William married Emily Ellen "Emma" Foster in Pontiac. William was 27, and Emma was 24 when they married. They had six children.

Luther Berger "Bud" Decker was a son of William and Emma Decker, born in 1885. Around 1896, William Decker retired from farming and moved to Fairbury. The William Decker family lived at 207 West Oak Street. Bud Decker attended Fairbury schools. William Decker established a company that provided electricity to Fairbury homes.

In 1898, William Decker joined the Fairbury Tarbolton Masonic Lodge. The Fairbury Lodge was chartered in 1860 and is one of the oldest social clubs in Fairbury.

In 1903, Bud Decker finished his schooling. His first job was working at the Walton Bank in Fairbury when he was 18. In 1908, Bud took a new job as a traveling salesman for the Illinois Card & Novelty Company. After working for less than one year as a traveling salesman, Bud took a position at the Milne Drug Store in Fairbury. Bud worked 26 years as an assistant pharmacist at the Payne Bros. Drug Store in Fairbury. Eventually, Bud's father bought this drug store and renamed it the W. B. Decker and Sons Drug Store.

In 1912, William Decker sold the electric generating plant. He then purchased a rice farm in Wheatley, Arkansas. Several Fairbury men purchased rice farms near Stuttgart, Arkansas, in that era. The most notable of these men were Isaac Walton, one of the Walton Bros. Department store founders in Fairbury. Isaac Walton was the largest landowner of rice fields in Arkansas shortly before he died in 1913.

In 1927, Emma Decker, wife of Bud Decker, died at 70. She was buried at Graceland Cemetery. In 1933, Bud Decker married Johanna Sophia Meyer. Sophia was born in Crescent City, Illinois. Bud was 48, and Sophia was 33 when they married. Bud and Sophia had no children and lived at 408 East Ash Street.

In 1933, Bud Decker began a 40-year-long career as the Fairbury City Clerk. He eventually served four different mayors during his long career.

In 1954, at the age of 100, William Decker became the world's oldest Mason. William was the only Mason in Illinois awarded the 75-year member jewel. William's 100th birthday party was conducted at the Fairbury-Cropsey High School. Mason members from as far away as Berne, Switzerland, attended the party. William was presented with a hand-tooled plaque made by a Chicago artist whose hands had also fashioned works of art for the President, the crown prince of Japan, and the Pope.

In 1958, William Decker died at the age of 103 at the Masonic Home in Sullivan, Illinois. William was buried at Graceland Cemetery. Si Moser, Clarence Hadaway, J. K. Huette, Russell Mowery, Harvey Day, and Bill Estep were pallbearers.

Sophia Decker, the wife of Bud Decker, died in 1970 at 69. She was buried in her hometown of Crescent City, Illinois, at the Saint Peters Lutheran Cemetery.

In 1973, Bud Decker retired as the City Clerk after serving over 40 years and four different mayors. At one time, Bud held five jobs: City Clerk, secretary-treasurer of the Trinity Lutheran Church and Graceland Cemetery Association, secretary of Royal Arch Masons, and secretary of the Fairbury City Council.

Four years later, in 1977, Bud Decker died at the age of 92 at the Greenbrier Lodge in Piper City. Bud was buried with his wife at the Saint Peters Lutheran Cemetery in Crescent City.

William Decker and his son Bud Decker were active members of the Fairbury community for over eight decades. William became the oldest member of the Masonic Lodge in the world, and Bud served over four decades as the Fairbury City Clerk.

When William Decker turned 100 in 1954, he became the oldest Masonic Lodge member in the world.